



Union County First Steps Partnership *Fiscal Year 2008 Annual Report*

Board Chair: Jean Pennas
Executive Director: Linda C. Parker

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Total children under age 6: 1,999
Children under age 6 living in poverty:
8.2%

Union County Highlights:

- Touch a Truck '08
- No excuses-All barriers to my success were taken away!
- Union County First Steps receives Vista Grant.
- Early Steps Matching Grant Opportunity

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Union County is located in the upstate of South Carolina and was once a thriving area prior to the textiles industry disappearing. Union County is now plagued with issues relating to unemployment.

Nearly one in three children in Union County are born to a mother possessing less than a high school diploma. One in four Union County birth is to a mother under 20 years of age. Roughly 1 in 12 Union County children have an annual income equivalent to (10,325 (or less) for a family of four. Kid's Count indicates that 77.1 percent of children under the age of six in Union County have parents in the workforce.

Children in poverty often face a wide variety of obstacles to school readiness. To increase children's readiness for school and respond to concerns of parents and county need, Union County Partnership targeted its resources toward Family/Strengthening, Literacy and Quality 4K. Union County has placed special emphasis on quality training for childcare facilities and Head Start centers. A certified staff will provide quality technical assistance and mentoring to childcare and Head Start staff in FY 09, using researched-based best practices.

Despite our statistics, Union County has many success stories summarized below under program strategies. The Union County First Steps Partnership focuses on filling in the gap by collaborating and partnering with the following agencies: Union County School District, Union Carnegie Library, DSS, DHEC, the City of Union, the County of Union and other agencies/individuals. Through collaborative partnerships, First Steps provides opportunities for children to be the best they can be because these children are the future of Union County. Unless we assure that these children receive a quality education, the Union County cannot recruit industry and people to move into the area. Without an educated workforce, Union will not be able to grow and offer a quality of life that our citizens deserve.

First Steps to School Readiness Strategy Areas

The First Steps initiative approaches children's school readiness needs in five ways:

Family Strengthening: A parent is a child's first and best teacher. First Steps works to help parents become the best parents they can be. First Steps also helps parents further their own education.

Healthy Start: Children's development and ability to learn are profoundly impacted by their health in the earliest years. First Steps works to help families understand children's health needs through education and screenings while also working to help them access needed health services.

Quality Child Care: Quality child care provides immediate and long-term learning benefits for children. First Steps works to expand the availability of quality child-care to families and to enhance the level of quality in existing child-care environments.

Early Education: Research shows that children who participate in high-quality preschool classes are more likely to start school ready to learn, as well as be more successful later in life. First Steps works to expand high-quality 3-year-old and 4-year-old kindergarten opportunities in public and private settings.

School Transition: The transition into kindergarten is a critical time that sets the tone for children's perspectives about the school years, as well their parents' perspectives. Making a strong initial connection between school and home -- and supporting both parents and students during this transition time -- has been shown to impact students' later school success and parents' later involvement during the school years.

2007-08 County Partnership Programs by Strategy

FAMILY STRENGTHENING

Parents as Teacher (PAT)/Family Literacy

Program Description: The goal of this program is to increase the capacity of parents to be their child's best teacher by expanding the successful PAT home visitation program serving the neediest of the needy within a comprehensive literacy program.

Program Results:

- An additional 20 families and 20 children were served in the Parents as Teacher Program.
- Three hundred thirty-two books with developmentally appropriate activities were distributed to families in the program.
- Fifty-two books were lent to families participating in the program.
- Three hundred thirty-two intensive visits lasting one hour were delivered providing parents with information and resources to strengthen their role as their child's most important teacher.
- The average number of home visits per family per month was 2.94.
- 100% of participating families were enrolled in Imagination Library Program.

- Families reported 100% satisfaction in the program.
- Developmentally appropriate childcare was provided at the literacy center to parents working on their GED or Diploma.
- Five adults received GED and plan to further their education.
- Staff was trained in the KIPS evaluation using pre- and post- test studies.
- Families demonstrated a slight improvement using the pre- and post- studies with KIPS.

QUALITY CHILD CARE

Quality Childcare Training

Program Description: The Union County First Steps Partnership provided training for all childcare providers and Head Start in Union County using certified trainers with the Center for Child Care Career Development.

Program Results:

- Thirteen childcare facilities serving over 460 children participated in training.
- Head Start staff serving approximately 140 children attended training.
- One childcare provider became enhanced and can accept ABC vouchers.

EARLY EDUCATION

Half-Day Four Year Old Kindergarten

Program Description: The goal of this strategy was to increase the number of children attending high quality childhood education programs by establishing two additional half-day public 4K classes to serve 40 of the neediest children.

Program Results:

- The half-day classrooms were located in a school with the highest poverty level in the district based on the number of children receiving free-and reduced lunch.
- All participating students were targeted for participation on the basis of compound school readiness risk factors to include Dial 3 screening scores in the bottom 25 %, free- and reduced- lunch, mother's educational level, health risk and other factors.
- Both lead teacher and teaching assistant are trained in the High Scope curriculum.
- The lead teacher completed an in-depth training in ECERS-R by Frank Porter Graham.
- All participating students were documented to have met all South Carolina Curriculum standards for 4K.

SCHOOL TRANSITION

Countdown to Kindergarten

Program Description: The Countdown to Kindergarten program provided 20 at-risk children an eight-week summer home visitation program using certified teachers.

Program Results:

- Twenty children were served 8 visits from a certified teacher
- Twenty children received age-appropriate books and manipulatives.

Financial Summary

<u>Expenditures by Funding Source</u>			
State Appropriation.	\$147,615.00	State Private	\$-0-
E.I.A. Appropriation	\$ 35,381.00	Local Private	\$8,081.00
Lottery Appropriation	\$-0-	Federal	\$-0-
C.D.E.P.P. Appropriation	\$-0-	In-Kind	\$ 28,900.00
47,C.O.E. Appropriation	\$-0-		

<u>Expenditures by Program/Strategy Name</u>	
10-2011 Parents as Teacher	\$ 41,206.00
10-2091- Library based program/Literacy	10,355.00
10-3161- Half Day 4k	85786.00
10-6012 Child Car Quality Enhancement	8896.00
10-6052 Child Care Training & Professional Dev.	12,326.00
55-4062 Countdown to Kindergarten	4,666.00
Indirect Programmatic Functions	36627.00
Administrative Functions	20,115.00
GRAND TOTAL	\$219,977.00

NOTABLE DONORS

<i>DONOR'S NAME</i>	AMOUNT
Linda Parker	106.00
Lockhart Power Company	100.00
Timken	200.00
SC First Steps	197,978.00
Union County Schools	2,960.00
United Way of Greenville	1,000.00

Local Match Percentage for FY 2008: 25.05%

UNION COUNTY FIRST STEPS **PARTNERSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

Jenny Alexander –Parent of a preschool child
Vivian Barrett- Childcare
Annnie Pearl Bell – Family Education/Literacy
Debra Bishop- DSS Appointee
Mary Virginia Blackwell- Early Childhood Education
Sonja Crank – non-profit
Mary Foster – Family Education/Literacy
Beth Fowler- Business Community
Dale Goff- Union County School District Appointee
Audrey Henderson- Business Community
Torrence Inman – non-profit
Barbara Jeter- Head Start Appointee
Margaret McCarley – Pre- K Education
Kristine McWhorter- Parent of Preschool child
Edward Palmer – Transportation
Jean Pennas – Chair person
Marie Riley – Childcare
Nancy Rosenwald- Library Appointee
Margie Ruff – Early Childhood Educator
Alton Stone – Faith Community
Paula Tucker – DHEC Appointee
Julie West – Health Care

COUNTY DATA SNAPSHOT

In FY08, First Steps County Partnerships statewide made it a priority to become increasingly data-driven. County Partnerships successfully began using powerful new components of the First Steps data system, and County Partnerships also utilized data in new ways to drive their FY09 program plans. In addition to enhanced program data tracking, County Partnerships are also focusing on the best available data about children and families to best understand their communities' needs. At the end of FY08 and the beginning of FY09, County Partnerships began an extensive analysis of this data, including data about the risk factors known to impact children's potential school success, such as low birth weight, teen mothers, and families living in poverty. A county-level risk data report is included in the subsequent pages of this report.

SUCCESS STORIES:

1 Touch a Truck'08

Touch A Truck'08 was an interactive exhibit celebrating the Week of the Young Child on April 19, 2008. The Executive Director, Linda Parker developed a task force to plan this special event. The task force included representatives from city government, county government, DSS, DHEC, Arts Council School District, Wallace Thomson Hospital, Union Carnegie Library, Housing Authority, and other local businesses and agencies. Prior to the event, a parade with over 150 children from local Head Start and childcare facilities marched down Main Street to the County Court House. The children were welcomed by the mayor and the county supervisor. The mayor read a proclamation declaring the Week of the Young Child. Many childcare facilities held open house and planned activities during the week. The week ended on Saturday with the signature event, Touch A Truck'08. This event was held at the Union County fairgrounds with every truck imaginable. The owners of the vehicles interacted with all the children and many allowed the children to sit in the vehicle and explore. Lights were seen and horns were heard all over the fairgrounds. Owners of the vehicles donated the use of the vehicle and their time. Healthy snacks and juice were donated by Bi Lo, Piggly Wiggly and Food Lion. We were pleasantly surprised at the children eating these healthy foods and asking for more fruit and cheese. Fifteen agencies in Union County set up booths with information and door prizes. USC- Union, our local University, donated the funds to provide a trackless train that rode the children around the fairgrounds during the event. Crafts and face-painting were available to all. This event was made possible by the enthusiasm, collaboration, and hard work of many people who have a deep love for our children in Union County.

Our goal was to have an event the children would enjoy and build lasting relationships with the local agencies in Union County that work with children and families. Our goal was met. Many individuals, agencies and First Steps board members want to make "Touch a Truck" an annual or signature event. One interesting comment made was that so many dads participated in this event with their kids.

2 Parenting/ Family Strengthening

Rosalyn Briggs is a participant in our Parents as Teachers Program. She is the single parent of a three year old child. Rosalyn and her son received home visits and attended play time at the center. Eventually Rosalyn began the GED program to complete her high school education. This

past spring she received her GED and is planning to attend community college. Rosalyn was a guest speaker at our recent summit held in Lancaster. She approached the podium with an obvious air of confidence. As she told her story, many eyes were filled with tears. Rosalyn told the group about how the program helped her and she hoped that First Steps would continue to support programs such as the home visitation program and the Family Resource Center. She said "every time I said I could not possibly do something, this program found a way to remove that barrier and I no longer had an excuse. If I did not have a way to get to the program, the home visitor would pick me up. My child was taken care of while I prepared for the GED". Rosalyn told the group at the Summit that because of this program she could now be somebody and make something out of her life and she was going to do just that for her son.

#3Vista:

The Union County First Steps Partnership was very fortunate to receive a Vista grant that will allow the Partnership to have a Vista Volunteer Member to join the Executive Director on building capacity for programs in Union County. Vista Member, Barbara Fowler will be developing and implementing a Grandparent/Relatives Raising Children support group in Union. She will also work with the Executive Director to support other programs/strategies.

#4 Save the Children

The Union County First Steps Partnership is one of four counties in South Carolina that will receive an Early Steps matching grant with Save the Children. We look forward to working with Save the Children and Union County School District to expand literacy opportunities for our children.

2008 School Readiness Risk Profile

Union County

Total Children Under Six: 1,998

CHILD POVERTY (Children in Families Receiving TANF Benefits)

Statewide Average (2007): 8.4%

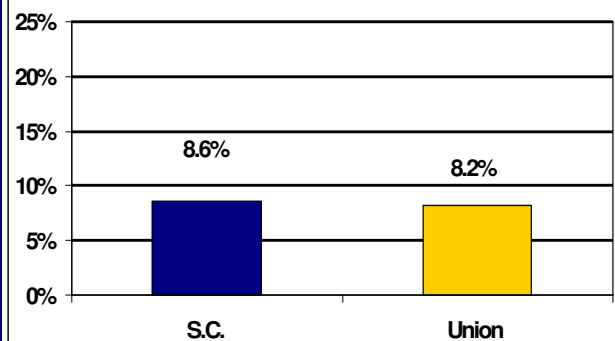
Union County (2007): 8.2%

Fast Fact: Roughly 1 in 12 Union County children has an annual family income equivalent to \$10,325 (or less) for a family of four. A recent statewide analysis suggests that 45% of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

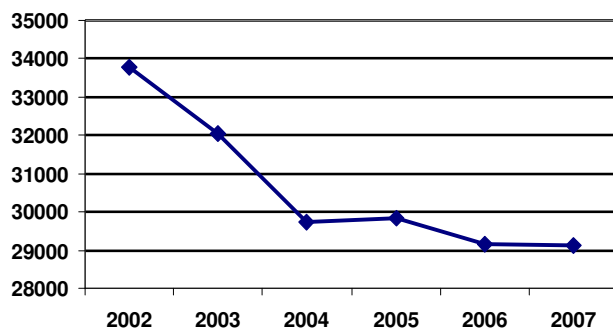
Children in deep poverty often face a wide variety of school readiness obstacles, ranging from inadequate prenatal care and nutrition to low maternal education.

163 of Union County’s 1,998 children under age 6 received federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits during 2007, indicating a family income at or below 50% of the federal poverty definition.

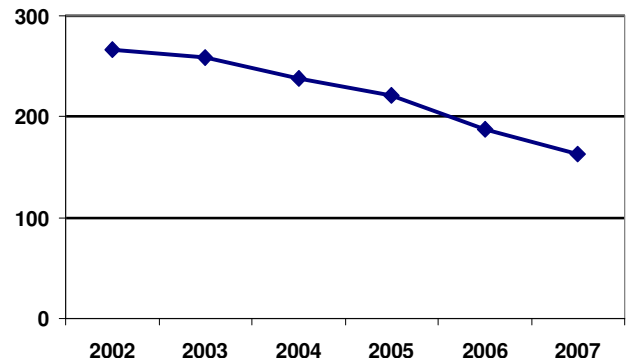
Children Under Age 6 Receiving TANF Benefits
(August 2007)



South Carolina Children Under Age 6
Receiving TANF Benefits
2002-2007



Union County Children Under Age 6
Receiving TANF Benefits
2002-2007



2008 School Readiness Risk Profile

Union County

Total Children Under Six: 1,998

CHILDREN AT LOW BIRTH WEIGHT (Less Than 5.5 lbs.)

Statewide Average (2005): 10.2%

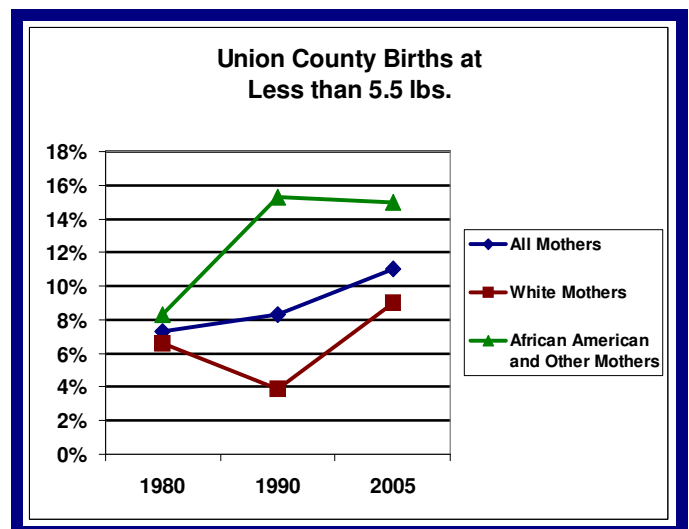
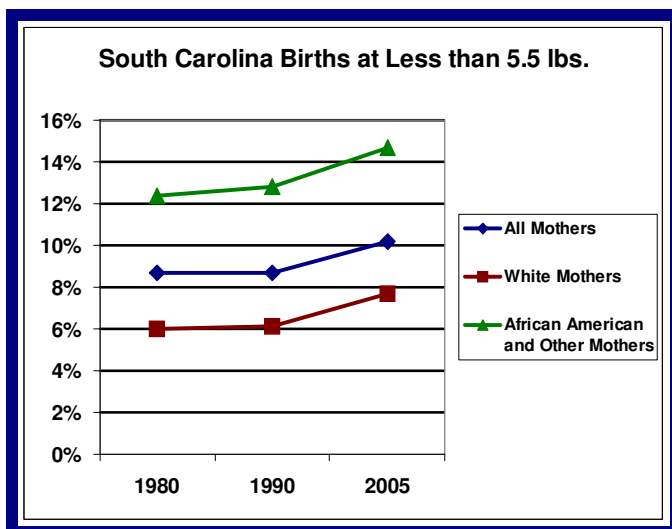
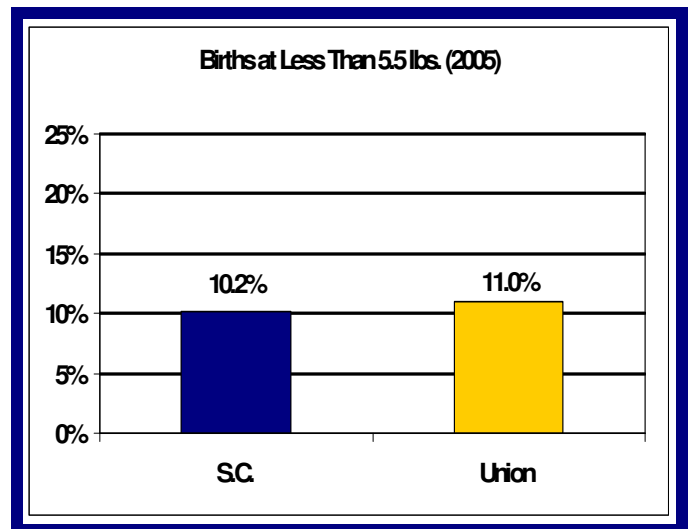
Union County (2005): 11.0%

Fast Fact: 1 in 10 Union County children is born at a weight less than 5.5 lbs. A recent statewide analysis suggests that at least one-third of these children (36%-52% depending on weight category) will be retained or score at the "below basic" level (PACT) by third grade.

Babies born at low weights are often prone to developmental delays associated with early academic failure.

Many have received inadequate prenatal care and suffer from significant health complications.

35 of the 317 children born in Union County during 2005 weighed less than 5.5 lbs.



2008 School Readiness Risk Profile

Union County

Total Children Under Six: 1,998

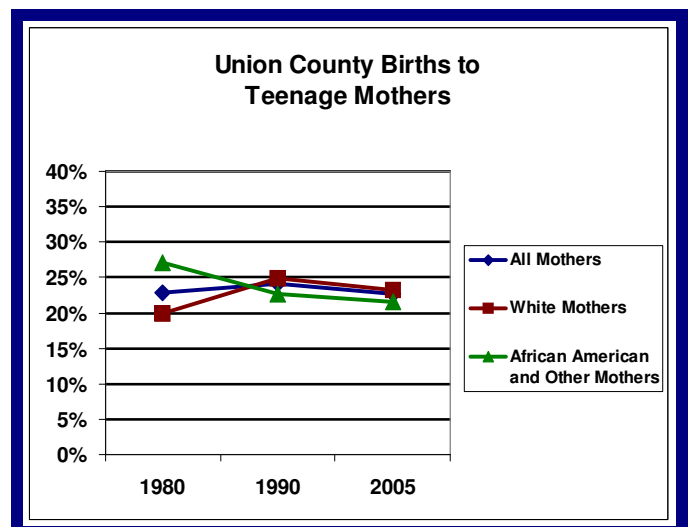
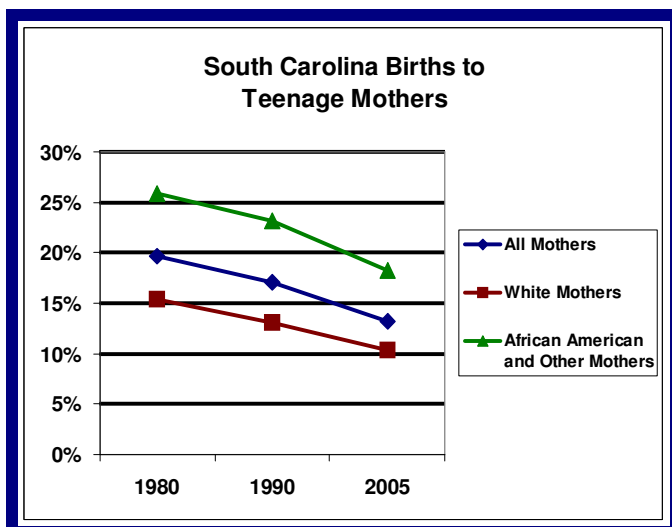
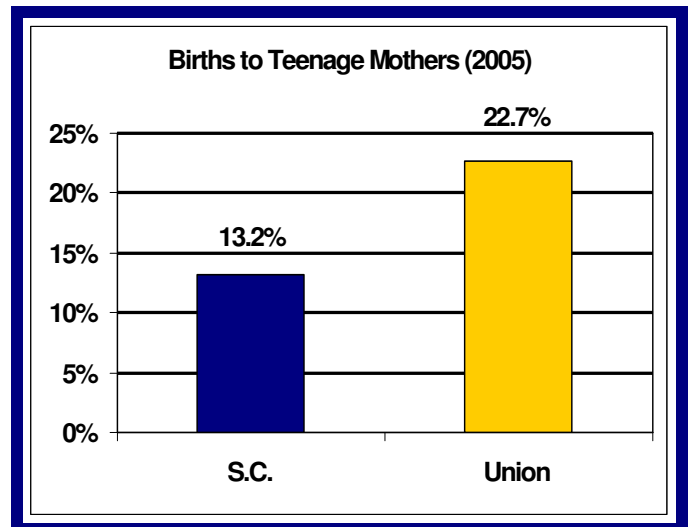
BIRTHS TO TEENAGE MOTHERS

Statewide Average (2005): 13.2% Union County (2005): 22.7%

Fast Fact: Nearly 1 in 4 Union County births is to a mother under 20 years of age. A recent statewide analysis suggests that 43% of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

Teenage parents often lack the maturity and knowledge required to optimally fulfill important parental responsibilities, are less likely to advance their own educational attainment and often fail to advance beyond low-income status.

72 of the 317 children born in Union County during 2005 had teenage mothers.



2008 School Readiness Risk Profile

Union County

Total Children Under Six: 1,998

BIRTHS TO MOTHERS WITH LESS THAN A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

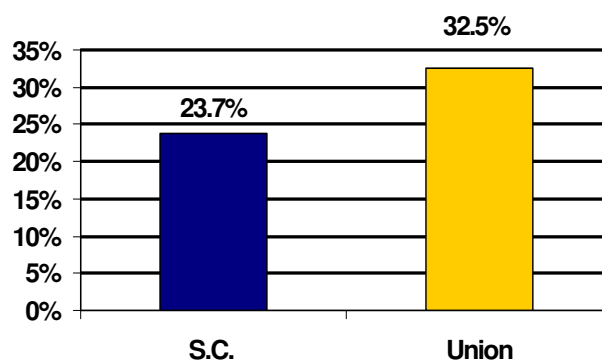
Statewide Average (2005): 23.7% Union Sumter County (2005): 32.5%

Fast Fact: Nearly 1 in 3 children in Union County is born to a mother possessing less than a high school diploma. A recent statewide analysis suggests that roughly half (48%) of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

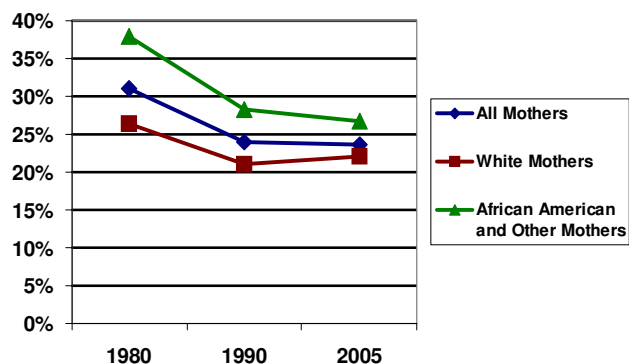
Research suggests that a mother’s own educational attainment is closely linked to the subsequent academic performance of her children.

103 of the 317 children born in Union County during 2005 had mothers with less than a high school diploma.

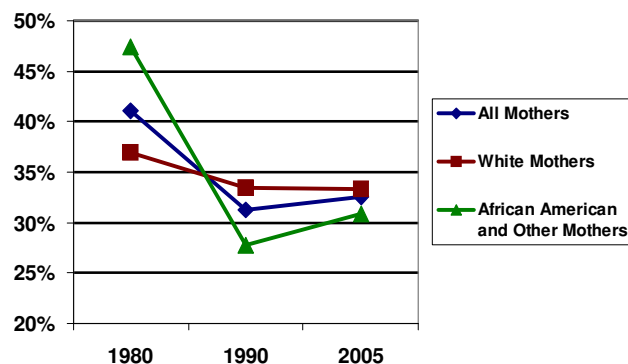
Births to Mothers with Less than a High School Diploma (2005)



SC Births to Mothers with Less than a High School Diploma



Union County Births to Mothers with Less than a High School Diploma



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Our goal that day was to have an event the children would enjoy and build lasting relationships with the local agencies in Union County that work with children and families of children. Our goal was met. In fact, I thought this would be a one shot event, but so many individuals, agencies and my board members want to make Touch A Truck an annual event. I believe Union County First Steps Partnership may have found their signature event. One interesting comment made was that so many dads participated in this event with their kids.

2 Parenting/ Family Strengthening

One very special story I would like to tell you involves our Parents as Teacher/Family Literacy program participant Rosalyn Briggs. Rosalyn is the single parent of a three year old child. She and her son received home visits, attended play time at the center, and eventually Rosalyn began the GED program to complete her high school education. This past spring she received her GED. She is planning to attend community college in the fall. Rosalyn was a guest speaker at our recent summit held in Lancaster. She approached the podium with an obvious air of confidence. As she told her story, many eyes were filled with tears. Rosalyn told the group about how the program had helped her and she hoped that First Steps would continue to support programs such as the home visitation program and the Family Resource Center. She said "Every time I said I could

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#4 Save the Children

The Partnership has just been notified that we are one of four counties in South Carolina that will receive an Early Steps matching grant with Save the Children. We look forward to working with Save the Children and Union County School District to expand literacy opportunities for our children.